



Drug Fact Sheet

Khat

Overview

Khat is a flowering evergreen shrub that is abused for its stimulant-like effect. Khat has two active ingredients, cathine and cathinone.

Street names

Abyssinian Tea, African Salad, Catha, Chat, Kat, Oat

Looks like

Khat is a flowering evergreen shrub. Khat that is sold and abused is usually just the leaves, twigs, and shoots of the Khat shrub.



Methods of abuse

Khat is typically chewed like tobacco, then retained in the cheek and chewed intermittently to release the active drug, which produces a stimulant-like effect. Dried Khat leaves can be made into tea or a chewable paste, and Khat can also be smoked and even sprinkled on food.

Affect on mind

Khat can induce manic behavior with grandiose delusions, paranoia, nightmares, hallucinations, and hyperactivity. Chronic Khat abuse can result in violence and suicidal depression.

Affect on body

Khat causes an immediate increase in blood pressure and heart rate. Khat can also cause a brown staining of the teeth, insomnia, and gastric disorders. Chronic abuse of Khat can cause physical exhaustion.

Drugs causing similar effects

Khat's effects are similar to other stimulants, such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

Overdose effects

The dose needed to constitute an overdose is not known, however it has historically been associated with those who have been long-term chewers of the leaves. Symptoms of toxicity include delusions, loss of appetite, difficulty with breathing, and increases in both blood pressure and heart rate. Additionally, there are reports of liver damage (chemical hepatitis) and of cardiac complications, specifically myocardial infarctions. This mostly occurs among long-term chewers of khat or those who have chewed too large a dose.

Legal status in the United States

The chemicals found in khat are controlled under the Controlled Substances Act. Cathine is a Schedule IV stimulant, and cathinone is a Schedule I stimulant under the Controlled Substances Act, meaning that it has a high potential for abuse, no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, and a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision.

Common places of origin

Khat is native to East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where the use of it is an established cultural tradition for many social situations.